

WASHINGTON, D.C. — By an overwhelming bipartisan vote of [383 to 41](#), the House of Representatives overrode President Bush's veto of the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (H.R. 6331) today. Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), Assistant to the Speaker of the House, the only congressional member from Southern California on the Ways and Means Committee and a member of the Health Subcommittee, voted to override the president's veto.

The Senate approved the veto override by a vote of 70 to 26 following the House vote. The bill passed the House June 24 by a vote of 355 to 59, and passed the Senate July 9 by a vote of 69 to 30.

The legislation now becomes law.

"It's not often that you get a strong bipartisan vote in the House and the Senate," Rep. Becerra said on the floor of the House. "We almost went over the cliff, and today we have a chance to make sure doctors will get their payments and seniors will get their services. This is the type of consensus we need, and we did it without adding a single cent to the deficit. This is the right way to go."

H.R. 6331 incorporates similar major provisions from the Medicare Savings Program Improvement Act ([H.R. 3127](#)), which was introduced by Rep. Becerra last year.

Specifically, it includes:

- Changes to the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) to allow modest-income seniors to save more money and still qualify for assistance in paying their premiums, co-payments and deductibles.
- Removes barriers for low-income seniors to sign up for benefits by getting the Social Security Administration to send information to states that will begin the application process for Medicaid to pay their out-of-pocket costs.
- Eliminates the option for states to carry out estate recoveries for modest-income beneficiaries who apply for assistance in paying their premiums, co-payments and deductibles.

- Extends the Qualified Individuals (QI) Program through 2009, which pays outpatient care premiums for seniors with incomes just above the poverty level.

The legislation makes other important improvements to the Medicare program for providers and patients.

The bill eliminates the pending 10 percent cut in Medicare payments to physicians for the remainder of the year and provides an update to physician payments of 1.1 percent for 2009, and provides a bonus for doctors who report on quality measures they have implemented. It also requires Medicare Advantage plans to pay pharmacies promptly (within two weeks) and update the prices of their reimbursement rates for prescription medicines on a weekly basis.

A complete summary of the H.R. 6331 can be found [here](#) at the Ways and Means Committee Web site.



[Click here](#) to view video of Rep. Becerra's floor speech.

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